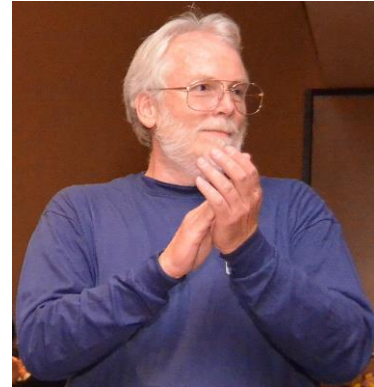


John Jarchow has been selected as the 2016 Navajo/Apache Region First Things First Champion for Young Children.

The award is given to local champions who actively volunteer their time to raise public awareness of the importance of early childhood development and health. Champions spend a significant amount of time volunteering with FTF and building public awareness about the importance of early childhood issues.



Jarchow, who lives in Pinetop, volunteers with FTF to develop more opportunities for early childhood and K-12 education professionals to share training and professional development opportunities related to emergent and early literacy, distribute children's books and teaching resources across the region, and strengthen the connection between children's earliest experiences and their later success in school and in life.

Jarchow engaged in awareness-raising efforts such as:

- Organized and partnered with the First Things First Navajo/Apache Regional Director to deliver emergent and early literacy focused professional development.
- Serving on FTF committees on Request for Grant Application External Review Committees since 2012
- Serving on FTF Regional Partnership Council nominating committees since 2012.
- Infusing the importance of early childhood into his work with Three Rivers, Books for Kids AZ, and the White Mountain Nature Center.
- Serving on the Navajo/Apache High Quality Early Childhood Partner Community Coalition
- Being intricately involved in the groundwork for the development of a local Read On Community that will work to support and align our regions' multiple and varied approaches to early literacy programs and support.

Jarchow is a member of the Northern Arizona Vocational Institutes of Technology Joint Technology Education District (NAVIT, JTED) School Board, Books for Kids AZ and the White Mountain Nature Center.

We recently caught up with Jarchow, who is the Regional Coordinator for Building Communities Supporting Children's Reading – a federally-funded project implemented by the Three Rivers Education Foundation.

Question: Why do you feel early childhood development and health is so important?

Answer: I believe there is not a more important commitment of time and effort that we can make than in early childhood development and health. It is clear that even a small expenditure of time and effort at early childhood can save a huge commitment of resources that will later be required for remediation and/or rehabilitation.

Q: What caused you to get involved in efforts to increase public awareness in early childhood issues?

A: It has become clear from my life experiences that early childhood is truly the key period in an

individual's development. Much of my life I have dealt with individuals who can trace many of her or his personal hurdles back to early childhood. In contrast I have seen individuals with a solid early childhood foundation flourish throughout her or his life.

Q: Why do you feel building awareness in early childhood and developmental health is so important for families and communities?

A: Building awareness will require a re-ordering of our priorities, casting aside the distractions of our lives and concentrating on what is truly important.

Q: How have you seen awareness for the early years change in your community?

A: Society is constantly evolving and changing. During my lifetime there are many very positive things that have occurred, but with change also comes consequences. The challenges of early childhood are greater now than ever before. Many of the support systems available to a child in the past are no longer there.

Q: How do you suggest other people in your community get involved?

A: I think we as a community, state, nation, and planet, need to celebrate parenting and care-giving and make the efforts of individuals to help young children something truly valued and appreciated.